

4 June 1952

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director for Policy Coordination
FROM: Deputy Director (Plans)
SUBJECT: Pros and Cons of Proposal to Detach Albania from
the Soviet Orbit

1. Attached hereto is a copy of a brief roundup which points up a number of the most important pros and cons involved in the proposal to detach Albania from the Soviet orbit. This little paper brings into rather clear focus the details of this particular problem which is currently under examination for possible inclusion as one of the features in the strategic plan for cold war operations. It raises serious doubts as to the over-all advisability of the undertaking.

2. There are a few points which are omitted and which I think are worthy of inclusion in a study such as this.

a. It should be remembered that we were originally interested in disrupting and hopefully denying the use of Albania to the Soviet/Communist side as a base of guerrilla warfare operations into Greece (and possibly against Yugoslavia). In the latter months of the Greek guerrilla war Albania served as the principal operating base for the Communist forces in Greece. The priority of attention and effort with respect to Albania dropped sharply upon the liquidation of the Greek guerrilla war; but NSC papers take into account and recognize the possibility of a reopening of this problem.

b. In the event of war it would probably be necessary to divert some "allied" strength to the clearing up of Albania, in order to remove the threat to the Adriatic and to eliminate the dagger at Tito's back. This requirement would come at a time when it would be most difficult to divert the necessary amount of strength and effort to do this job--with the possible result that Albania might have to be left alone and might thus continue as a harassing element for some time. (Other conditions permitting, Admiral Carney has expressed the belief that he possesses the capability of knocking out Albania in fairly short order by aerial bombardment; and Tito has consistently taken the position that his forces could overrun and clean up Albania within a period of two weeks.) Thus the only apparent military question in the hot war context is that already stated, viz., whether under the conditions from a general Soviet attack the forces could be spared to do the job.

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c. On the negative side is the fact that the economic requirements of this deficit area would have to be made up by ourselves rather than the Russians and this would place an additional strain upon our resources. From a purely cold-blooded point of view, it might be better for us to concentrate all efforts to further disorganize and hamstring the tottering Albanian economy, thus leaving the Russians with the unhappy alternative of pouring in resources of their own or allowing the fate of a rotting and desperate Albania to appear before all the world as further evidence of what happens to countries and peoples within the Soviet orbit.

d. One other point of considerable significance to CIA is the amount of effort which this program would involve on our part and the extent to which it would reduce our capabilities of attacking other and perhaps more useful targets.

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FRANK G. WISNER

Attachment

cc: Admiral Stevens
Messrs. Bohlen & Joyce
via Mr. Stelle, Dept of State

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1. Value of Albania to Soviets

a. Strategic value lies in Albania's position astride entrance to Adriatic; its value in giving Sovs a Mediterranean port (of negligible value without control of Yugo); possibility of use for forward air bases. None of these points are valid unless the Soviets are able to hold on to Albania in event of war. This is extremely doubtful, without occupation of Yugoslavia.

b. Economic value of Albania is practically negligible. In fact, Albania is more a detriment than an asset.

c. Political value of Albania lies in the existence of one more Communist country. Current political value, except for this, is negligible. The most important factor here is the loss of prestige to the Soviets resulting from successful coup or defection of Albania. This would be considerable.

2. Political Repercussions (a) of successful coup, and (b) of unsuccessful attempt.

a. The political repercussions of a successful coup, in the Western world (or non-Soviet orbit), would be significant but probably not enormous. Most people and governments in the non-Soviet world do not think a great deal about Albania, and aside from passing excitement, the long-range political results would not be great. As a demonstration that Communist rule can be overthrown, and that the USSR would shut up rather than put up, there would be some value to a coup. There would be universal agreement that the action was provocative to the USSR and therefore unnecessarily risky (unless the whole affair was clearly an internal revolt, successfully covered). A successful revolt in Albania, not followed by Soviet countermeasures would probably considerably heighten unrest and disaffection in the other Soviet satellites. Soviet reaction to this would be energetic.

b. The results of an unsuccessful attempt would be considerable. If Western or U. S. complicity was successfully covered, then these consequences would be minimized; however, the Communists could and would make damaging use of real evidence which they might turn up. Other Western powers would probably not back up any military or other measures necessitated by an unsuccessful initial attempt.

3. Soviet Reactions.

a. Soviet reaction would probably depend in large measure on how this coup was brought about, and the rapidity of it.

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b. A successful revolt carried through in a matter of hours, with safeguards for Soviet personnel, would present the USSR with a fait accompli to which it would probably not react directly (i.e., by military action).

c. An "indigenous" war of resistance would provoke strong security countermeasures in Albania, probably including the use of Soviet troops, if necessary. The success and ultimate Soviet course of action cannot further be foreseen.

d. A military invasion of Albania, or an unsuccessful initial attempt which required military follow-up on the part of the West might provoke the USSR to military countermeasures.

e. Direct Yugoslav and/or Greek attack on Albania might result in war.

4. Subsequent political and international complications.

a. Internal Albanian. Successful overthrow of Communist regime in Albania would revive and place in Western hands all of the internal political problems of the country, which involve in some cases violent political and economic differences. Albania is not, nor was it, a democracy. It is only beginning to emerge from a tribal era. A new Albanian regime probably could not provide a workable democracy; military dictatorship would probably result.

b. International. Greece, Yugoslavia and Italy have strong political interest in Albania. Greece has outstanding territorial claims, Yugoslavia has several points of dispute with Albania. Albania is viewed almost certainly as falling in either Greek, Yugoslav or Italian spheres of interest. No one of these three countries would want to see another in there. Alternative is partition, which would be unacceptable to the U. S. and Italy. Revival of an independent Albania would thus give rise to strong divisive trends in the Balkans, which at present are being overcome in the face of the Soviet threat.

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